

November 11, 2007

The Best of the Best

This morning we bring our sermon series on covenant keepers to a close. Our journey has taken us to see how Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednigo, the great reformers and Joseph all handled trial that came their way. In every situation they knew that they had a responsibility to do that which was right even in the face of death. They knew that they were to be holy, set apart to God because God Himself was holy and set apart for them. This was their motivation love a respect for God and His covenant. And for His part God certainly fulfilled His part of the covenant as each one of our covenant keepers experienced triumph.

Today our journey will take us to the door of another covenant keeper yet his trials may be the most difficult and his response may be the best. Who is this covenant keeper? Job, we heard about him in our Old Testament reading this morning, he was “blameless and upright he feared God and shunned evil”. He was living the covenant and God was fulfilling it for we see his blessings were on Job. Job had seven sons, three daughters and owned seven thousand sheep, three thousand camels, five hundred oxen, five hundred donkeys and a large number of servants. He was, “the greatest man among all the people of the East”. We see a little bit more about Job and his heart in Job 1: 5. When time came to hold a feast to the Lord Job would enter into it with a clean heart. He and his family would go through the purification process and then Job as the father would take on the role of priest and offer a sacrifice for all his family saying, “Perhaps my children have sinned and cursed God in their hearts”. Job loves God, respects the covenant, takes his duty as a father very seriously and loves his children. If you as a parent have ever fervently gone before Lord in prayer on behalf of your child or children you know exactly where Job was at.

But our setting changes quickly we see in verse 6 that we switch to a heavenly scene. The angelic host come before God and Satan joins them it should be noted here that the name Satan has a meaning it means the accuser. God asks Satan, “Where have you come from?” Satan replies, “From roaming through the earth and

going back in forth in it.” Satan is prowling the earth looking for trouble reminds us of 1 Peter 5:8 where it says, “Satan prowls around like a roaring lion seeking someone to devour.” God knows this He knows all and he comes right to the point, “Have you considered my servant Job? There is no one on earth like him. He is blameless and upright a man who fears God and shuns evil.” Hence the title of our sermon. If God says there is no one on earth like him Job is truly the best of the best but now the game is on. Satan, the accuser, begins to accuse. Who does he accuse? God, he accuses God of blessing Job, he accuses God of living up to the covenant. He also indirectly accuses job of being self-serving. He is only righteous because it pays or putting it another way Job loves the gifts more than he loves the giver. So begins Job’s first trial.

What a truly terrifying verse, verse 12 is God says to Satan, “Very well then everything he has is in your hands but on the man himself do not lay a finger.” We now see the ruthlessness of Satan. First a messenger comes and lets Job know that all of his donkey and oxen have been stolen and all of his servants who were attending to them were killed. Then the message comes that all seven thousand sheep and all the shepherds were killed. Then word comes that the camels are gone and those servants are also dead. Finally an monumental engineering failure his eldest son’s home collapses during a feast and all his children are dead. Job’s response to this trial we look to verses 20 and 21 of Job 1, “he fell to the ground and worshipped and said ‘Naked I came from my mother’s womb naked I will part the Lord gave the Lord has taken away may the name of the Lord be praised’.” There is no triumph for Job here but there is a triumph for God.

As we see in chapter 2 when Satan again comes before God and God says, “Have you considered my servant Job? There is no one on earth like him he is blameless and upright a man who fears God and shuns evil and he still maintains his integrity though you sided him against me to ruin him without any reason.” And Satan again lives up to his name he again accuses God and Job he says, “A man will give all he has for his own life but stretch out your hand and strike his flesh and bones and he will surely curse you to your face.” In other words you’ve limited me God you’re protecting him let me at him no holds barred and you will see that he is self serving and self centered. God’s response, “very well then he’s in your hands but you must spare his life.” The result is a four level trial.

First Job is inflicted with boils from the bottom of his feet to the top of his head. I had a boil once it was not good I cannot imagine the physical grief that Job experienced but he stayed true to the Lord. As a result of this, of his faithfulness, his wife loses it she gets angry and says, "Are you still holding on to your integrity? Curse God and die". Third level three of Job's friends come to him. They accuse him of being a hypocrite their message is basically this, "Job you put on a good front and appear to be a man of integrity but you're hiding sin we know this God sees it and he is punishing you that's how we know that you're really a sinner and you're a bad guy because you're going through hard times so there must be something wrong with you." Now it should be noted that through the next thirty chapters of their accusations Job's righteous, humble and patient response is Job never wavers. It is in this section that we get two great quotes of Job. Job 13: 15, "Though he slay me yet will I hope in Him." Which tells us something very quickly about this, Job didn't realize what was going on in heaven. He knew God was in control of everything so he figured these problems are coming from God. He didn't realize the spiritual battle that was going on between God and Satan and that all of this was really a result of God's ultimate faith and trust in Job. That's why says though he slay me yet I will hope in Him. He's not going to curse God he knows God is in control and it will all be okay.

Then Job 19:25 always quoted at Easter, "I know that my Redeemer lives." In the midst of all this I know that God is real and that He will redeem me. After thirty chapters of these friends falsely accusing him drawing their conclusions because things are going bad Job must be bad, there's a younger friend named Elihu who tears into Job in chapters 32 and 37. He flat out condemns Job for his sense of piety and innocence at which point God finally steps in and says enough.

God makes three points chapters 38 and 39 his point is made very clear his wisdom is beyond the reach of mankind, which Job acknowledges. Then in chapters 40 and 41 god makes the point that His ability to administer justice is beyond reproach. He admonishes job to trust Him and leave everything in His control, which Job does. Job says in verses 5-6 of chapter 42, "My ears have heard you now my eyes have seen you therefore I despise myself and repent in dust and ashes." Job had wanted to be able to stand before God and say God why are you doing this to me? Look at all these things that I've done I have remained faithful to you. But God has made the point

you don't understand what's going on here what I'm doing is right it is always right trust me. Job relents and says I'm sorry Lord I shouldn't even have wanted to plead my case I should have known you are God and as soon as he does this God restores Job and blesses him with seven sons and three daughters and he doubles all his possessions. And finally God does one more thing he forgives Job's friends the ones who came and falsely accused him, condemned him why? He makes it very clear to those friends because Job had prayed for them. Kind of reminds us of last week our call to forgive.

There is no one here that has been wronged like Job was wronged yet Job was able to forgive because Job was, "a blameless and upright man. A man who feared God and shunned evil. A man of integrity." May it be said of us that we have the heart and a spirit like Job.

In our Savior's name, Amen